

DRAFT NEWS RELEASE

GORE-CHERNOMYRDIN COMMISSION ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Washington, DC -- United States Vice President Albert Gore, Jr. and Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin today signed an historic bilateral agreement to increase cooperation between the United States and Russia in protecting our environment.

The new agreement, which will be administered by U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in consultation with the State Department and other agencies, replaces a 1972 accord between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. and opens new frontiers of cooperation between the two nations in several areas:

- broader range of cooperation, including global issues such as biodiversity, environmental management, and public participation in environmental decision-making;
- joint formulation of policy on environmental problems of bilateral, regional, and global significance;
- increased data sharing and more vigorous efforts to protect intellectual property rights.

The Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission was established in 1993 to address priority issues important to the two nations. The agreement signed today by the two leaders will help ensure that concern for the environment and sustainable use of natural resources are incorporated as a fundamental element of U.S.-Russian relations in the post-Cold War era.

Commenting on the agreement, EPA Administrator Carol M. Browner said, "Pollution does not respect political boundaries. We must cooperate in every way possible to address environmental challenges in our own countries and throughout the world."

Among the new cooperative efforts will be other initiatives announced today by the Commission:

- a U.S. EPA grant of \$50,000 to the International Cooperative for Ozone Layer Protection to help Russia phase out use of substances that deplete the stratospheric ozone layer;
- a U.S. AID grant of \$1 million to support the operations of two world-class Russian research facilities, the Komarov and Vavilov Institutes in St. Petersburg, whose collections and capabilities are critical to biological diversity on a global scale;
- a commitment to work together with other interested countries to reduce the risks associated with low-level liquid radioactive waste in the Russian Arctic.

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